

**STATE OF ALABAMA
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH
AND ADVISORY SERVICES**

SECTION I – GENERAL INFORMATION

I.1. OBJECTIVE: The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to provide sufficient information to interested Vendors to prepare and submit proposals for consideration by the Department of Finance, Information Services Division, hereafter referred to as the STATE to procure information technology research and advisory subscription services.

I.2. RESPONSE PREPARATION AND PROPOSAL FORMAT: Proposal must be in the same format and sequence as presented in this RFP. The Proposal must include: (a) a statement of compliance with the mandatory requirements, (b) complete service and product information, including technical and descriptive literature, and (c) any other requirements set forth within this Proposal. Information submitted shall be sufficiently detailed to substantiate that the services and products offered meet or exceed the requirements. The requirements stated herein are considered mandatory unless otherwise stated.

The information submitted by the Vendor will be used for a technical and cost evaluation. The STATE may use any other information submitted with the Proposal for evaluation purposes.

I.3. RESPONSE SUBMISSIONS: It is requested that a minimum of four (4) copies of the Proposal (original and three copies) be submitted with the Proposal response, which is to present ALL PRICING DATA clearly and completely. The STATE is not liable for any cost incurred by a Vendor responding to this RFP.

I.4. INQUIRIES: Any questions about technical data in the RFP must be submitted in writing to:

Mr. Eugene Akers
Finance - Information Services Division
64 North Union Street, Suite 785
Montgomery, Alabama 36104
Fax # (334) 242-3912

I.5. PROPOSAL AWARDS: Agreement(s) resulting from this solicitation shall be for a term of one (1) year with an option to renew for up to two additional 1-year renewals. Said contract(s) are renewable on an annual basis dependent upon funding.

I.6. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION: Selection will be based on all factors listed below and others implicit within this RFP. The presentation sequence of the criteria below does not indicate their precedence.

(1) Requirements. Proposal must meet all requirements.

(2) Qualification. This criterion includes an evaluation of:

(A) Vendor's past experience

(B) Ability of the Vendor to perform the terms of the RFP

(C) Quality and relevancy of the services and products proposed

- (3) Support. This criterion includes an evaluation of any and all support proposed by the Vendor.
- (4) Cost.

I.7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMENTS: The Proposal should include any additional information that is believed to be pertinent but not explicitly requested in this RFP.

I.8. ORAL PRESENTATIONS: Oral Presentations may be requested if they are necessary to properly document compliance with the requirements of this RFP. The STATE will not be liable for any costs associated with the presentations.

SECTION II - VENDOR IDENTIFICATION AND INFORMATION

II.1. COVER LETTER: Provide a signed letter of transmittal briefly stating the Vendor's understanding of the work to be done, and stating why the organization is believed to be qualified to perform the services. No mention of price is to be contained in the cover letter. Further, the cover letter must indicate that the proposal is good for a minimum of 60 days and acknowledge any addenda to the RFP.

II.2. CONTACT INFORMATION: Specify the name, title, office address, brief resume & business telephone number of those individuals responsible for the performance under the anticipated contract resulting from this RFP, including those individuals with primary day-to-day responsibility for the services contemplated herein, and specifying their relevant industry experience and location.

II.3. ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND: Provide a brief, general background description of the organization, including:

- its full company or corporate name, address of the headquarters office and the office to serve the STATE,
- how the business is organized (proprietorship, partnership, corporation, L.L.C.), parent or subsidiary corporations,
- the name, office address, and business telephone numbers of the principal officers of the organization,
- the year in which the Vendor was first organized to do business,
- the percentages and types of other services that Vendor provides; and,
- the organization's experience in providing information technology research and advisory services as a whole.

II.4. REFERENCES: Provide a list of at least five (5) references for which your organization has provided services, which are the same or substantially similar to those specified herein for a comparably sized firm, within the past two years.

SECTION III - EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS AND AWARD

III.1. PROCEDURE

After receipt of the Proposals, the STATE will evaluate the RFP's to determine those Vendors who are qualified and will then further determine which, in its sole judgment, is the best overall Proposal.

III.2. PROPOSAL EVALUATION: The criteria that may be used to determine the successful Vendor include, but are not limited to, the following (not in any order of priority):

- Evidence provided by the Vendor of its capability to provide the services as required;
- Bidding firm's relevant experience and the relevant experience and knowledge of the Vendor's proposed consultant(s);
- Vendor's proposed fee structure;
- Compliance of proposal response with the STATE's RFP; and,
- Business reference checks feedback from comparable firms.

III.3. RESERVATIONS: The STATE reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals, or any part thereof, if such action is deemed to be in the best interest of the STATE.

III.4. RECISION OF AWARD: Should an award be made by the STATE, and prior to execution of a contract, subsequent information indicates that such award was not in the best interests of the STATE, or the parties are unable to come to agreement on contract terms, the right is reserved to rescind said award and either award to another Vendor candidate or reject all Proposals.

III.5. FALSE OR MISLEADING STATEMENTS: Proposals which contain false or misleading statements, or which provide references which do not support an attribute or condition claimed by the Vendor, may, at the STATE's sole discretion, be rejected.

III.6. COMPLETENESS OF PROPOSAL: A Proposal may be rejected if it is conditional or incomplete, or if it contains any alterations of form or other irregularities of any kind. A Proposal shall be rejected if any such conditions, incompleteness, alterations, or irregularities constitute a material deviation from the RFP requirements.

III.7. ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE: The Account Representative must formally meet with the STATE's advisory services contact, at minimum, on a quarterly basis to discuss service utilization and technology issues. Extra consideration will be given to those Vendors who have an Account Manager for the advisory organization serving the STATE that is a full time resident of the State of Alabama.

SECTION IV - SCOPE OF SERVICES

IV.1. OVERVIEW

As the central information technology authority for the State of Alabama, the Information Services Division provides a variety of services to the participants throughout the network of state agencies and is heavily dependent upon technology to provide these services.

The Information Services Division (ISD) information technology (IT) staff maintains an extensive computing environment to meet its customers' needs. The IT staff constantly investigates improved methods to provide these services through the use of new technology and requires access to the most current information, research, trends, recommendations, and advice on technology. This includes advice from industry experts as well as experience from peers.

IV.2. SCOPE OF SERVICES

The purpose of this solicitation is to acquire information technology research and advisory subscription services meeting the requirements and provisions stated herein. Rapid access to high quality information and analytical/advisory subscription services is expected to assist the STATE in policy making; resource planning and management; project development; management and evaluation; vendor/supplier assessment; purchase decisions; contract negotiations; and industry trend analysis. The STATE expects the information content and the advisory services to be accurate, clear, relevant, timely, comprehensive, unbiased, and of high quality.

The STATE's objectives include providing access to the information and advisory subscription services for as many authorized IT staff across any and all state agencies as possible at a reasonable cost. The users will include the Directors of Information Systems, sub-process managers, technology consultants, and project leaders. It is expected that a limited number of these IT staff personnel will require frequent and in-depth information and advisory services, while many others will require infrequent decision support services.

While it is important for the IT staff to have access to research analysts, consultants and Vendors/suppliers, it is often critical to speak with other IT professionals who can share their first-hand experience with issues at hand and help avoid dangerous pitfalls. In addition, having access to shared documents such as policies, procedures and plans already developed by industry colleagues and based on real world trends will provide an important supplement to the vast sources of information research available today.

IV.3. PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

IV.3.1. Analyst-Based Subscription Services

The Vendor must provide a subscription-type program (or membership) for Information Technology Research and Advisory services for the STATE and the

STATE's IT Departments that meet or exceeds the specifications and requirements contained in Section IV.2.

The Vendor's program must provide research and advisory information, which should include created and published reports, planning assumptions, strategic analysis reports, research notes, bulletins, alerts and summaries of major industry events, custom design portals, and announcements. (Provide examples or samples of these reports, bulletins, etc. with your response.)

IV.3.2. Services Availability

The Vendor's research and advisory information must be available over the Internet (24x7x365).

- All members and users of the advisory service must be able to retrieve the information from the Internet by keyword search.
- The STATE must be able to print the information available on the Internet.

IV.3.3. Scope of Advisory Topics

The technology research and advisory services must cover the following categories and topics listed below, but not limited to, and must be available and provided upon request without any additional charges:

- a. Application Development Strategies
- b. Application Support Process
- c. Communication and Networking
- d. E-Business Applications and Strategies
- e. Information and Knowledge Management
- f. Computer Infrastructures – Mainframe/Distributed Systems
- g. Privacy and Security
- h. Business/Data Recovery
- i. IT Management and Services
- j. Emerging Trends and Technologies
- k. Business Intelligence and Data Warehousing
- l. Wireless and Mobile

IV.3.4. Advisory Analysts

The Vendor must have knowledgeable analysts available for inquiries from STATE personnel and agency personnel when requested.

- The Vendor's program must accommodate an unlimited number of concurrent STATE "Users" or "Members" that would be permitted to make inquiries.
- The Vendor must accept and respond to STATE requests within 24 hours. The response should acknowledge receipt of the request and include the time frame necessary to provide the requested information.

- There can be no limit placed on the number of inquiries that may be made by the STATE or agencies that are defined as “MEMBERS” to the service. This includes inquiries by phone, fax, email and voice-mail.
- The STATE may request that a phone response to an inquiry be conducted by teleconference where multiple STATE personnel would participate.
- The Vendor must have one centralized number or categorical numbers for phone inquiries.
- The Vendor must have one centralized number for fax inquiries.
- The Vendor must have e-mail query capabilities.

IV.3.5. Vertical Practices and Industries

The Vendor must provide a government vertical practice that specifically addresses issues associated with the government sector – federal, state and local. This practice must offer dedicated analysts, research and forums.

IV.3.6. Focus Groups and Communities of Interest

The Vendor must provide specific focus groups and communities of interest related to such topics as, but not limited to, security, e-government, architecture best practices.

IV.3.7 Regional and National Conferences

The Vendor must provide regional or national conferences on key information technology issues available at discount rates to STATE users.

IV.3.8. General Requirements

- The Vendor must provide audio teleconferences on current information technology issues selected by the Vendor with input from the STATE where multiple STATE personnel as well as other clients could participate.
- The Vendor must provide on-site facilitation to the STATE for meetings to discuss current and emerging information technology issues.
- The Vendor must provide a review and analysis of strategic planning documents upon request of the STATE.
- The Vendor must provide a review and written analysis of bid documents, contracts, reports, position papers, etc. upon request of the STATE. Evaluation of these documents remains the responsibility of ISD or agency involved.
- The Vendor must provide a quarterly report to the STATE

administrative coordinator on all inquiries made by STATE personnel that includes the following information:

- a. Name of employee making inquiry
 - b. Issue or topic
 - c. Analyst contacted
 - d. Date and time of inquiry
- The Vendor must provide one training seminar in Montgomery, Alabama for the initial contract period as soon after the award of the contract as mutually agreeable and annual training seminars in Montgomery upon request.
 - The Vendor must develop and maintain a distribution list of all licensed STATE users for purposes of e-mailing notices and research documents such as general announcements, technology alerts, new research documents, calendar of events, etc. The Vendor must be responsible for the distribution of all such general information to all licensed STATE users.
 - The Vendor must work independently and directly with the Information Services Division staff related to specific user requests.
 - The STATE will provide a single point of contact (“POC”) for the administrative functions of the contract. The Vendor must provide a single point of contact (“POC”) for the administrative functions of the contract.

SECTION V – PROPOSAL FORMAT

All Vendors shall respond to the RFP, utilizing the format described in this section (e.g. PART A, PART B, etc.), and to each section described below, providing, at a minimum, the information requested for each section or sub-section. **VENDOR MUST EXPRESSLY SET FORTH IN RESPONSE TO PART F ANY EXCEPTION(S) IT HAS TO THE RFP REQUIREMENTS. ANY EXCEPTION NOT EXPRESSLY SET FORTH WILL BE DEEMED WAIVED.**

PART A: PROPOSAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

1. Include all documents, information and statements required in Sections I, II, III and IV.
2. Acknowledge acceptance of all Vendor requirements (Section IV) and all terms set forth throughout this RFP.

PART B: RESPONSE TO SPECIFICATIONS

1. In your proposal response:
 - Describe your firm's services, including both analyst based research and/or shared member documents.
 - Discuss –
 - how your firm's services function;
 - licensing/use options and any limitations on use of the data;
 - what information and documents are included;
 - depth and frequency of research;
 - how the STATE would access the services (Internet, telephone, etc.);
 - how requests are accepted, responded to, tracked, and reported on;
 - categories/topics covered;
 - sources and methods used, including quality controls; and,
 - how the Vendor insures the information is current and up to date.
 - Discuss the number, background, training, education, and experience of your analysts/staff including degree of specialization and categories covered by individual staff members.
 - Describe the regional/national conferences held including themes, subjects, numbers, presenters, and locations and if and how teleconferences are used.
 - Discuss how you respond to requests for review and analysis of strategic planning documents, bid documents, reports, position papers, etc and requests for on-site facilitation of discussions on current and emerging technology.
 - Discuss training provided for the use of your services and how your firm keeps clients informed with notices, general announcements, calendar of events, seminars, forums, etc.

2. Any exceptions to the RFP requirements set forth in response to this PART B must be restated in response to PART F below.
3. Include, in this Part, any items that the STATE may not have addressed that may be beneficial to the project. Specifically proposed items must be identified as such, and any applicable costs must be included in PART C.

PART C: FEE PROPOSAL

1. Vendor must provide as Attachment I “Fee Proposal”, its proposal for all costs associated with the response - listing or otherwise indicating and/or defining membership packages and options.
2. Vendor must indicate in proposed special pricing considerations that may be available to the STATE.
3. Vendor must indicate its offerings for methods and timings of payment that meet the STATE’s requirement for quarterly arrears payments only.
4. Indicate other services that could be offered, with any additional costs related to such services identified separately.

PART D: INNOVATION AND COMMENT

1. Include any other information that Vendor believes to be pertinent but is not specifically asked for in this RFP.
2. Explain innovations or alternative approaches available from the Vendor in any area of this RFP.
3. Provide suggestions of other products or services available from the Vendor that may assist the STATE.

PART E: OTHER DOCUMENTS

Submit the following documents, as applicable.

1. Any Addenda to the RFP.
2. Proposed contracts and/or specific terms/conditions.

PART F: EXCEPTIONS SUMMARY

List and fully explain all exceptions taken to any term or condition of this RFP.